Introduction: Ecopoetic Place-Making in Contemporary American Poetry

Anthropogenic environmental change and the uneven global effects of mass mobility, each with their own unique histories and long-term effects on life on the planet, are two of the most urgent challenges of the twenty-first century. Contemporary American poetry can help us understand some of the complex ways in which these two challenges are interrelated. When connecting environmental change and mass mobility, both public and scholarly debates frequently focus on the phenomenon of climate refugees and environmental migrants, that is, on individuals who have been displaced by climate change or environmental degradation. A similar trend can be observed when environmental crisis and human mobility are discussed in works of literature and popular culture, especially in the United States. Whether in Hollywood blockbusters such as Roland Emmerich's *The Day After Tomorrow* (2004), documentary films such as Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006), or contemporary works of science fiction such as Paolo Bacigalupi's *The Water Knife* (2015), climate refugees have become a powerful shorthand for the ways in which environmental change and matters of mobility are imagined together. Yet, as is necessarily the case with this kind of shorthand, the figure of the climate refugee cannot capture the complex interplay between environmental issues and human mobility. Understanding these complexities is crucial, however, because the sedentary lifestyle idealized by traditional environmentalist discourses, most strands of ecocriticism, and the dominant traditions of ecopoetry has often been unattainable for large parts of the world's population and will only become more so as oceans continue to rise and deserts continue to spread. In particular, idealized notions of emplacement as attachment to one's chosen place of residence resulting from long-term inhabitation have little in common with the lived experiences of displaced peoples who are forced to move due to floods, droughts, famine, and armed conflicts over dwindling resources, or prevented from doing so by borders, walls, or patrol boats, whether in the United States or elsewhere. Attending to the intersections of environmental issues and human mobility matters too, because econativist arguments that link (pseudo-)ecological, racist, and anti-immigrant discourses continue to resurface in times of national and global crisis and are all too easily used to attack marginalized communi-

ties of color in particular, whether they are actually on the move or merely unwanted in their current place of residence. Reading contemporary American poetry about nature and mobility by poets with different migratory backgrounds, I argue in this study, can help us to counter such arguments and enrich existing models for how to live place-conscious and sustainable lives. As I will show in the following, the poetry of Craig Santos Perez, Juliana Spahr, Derek Walcott, Agha Shahid Ali, and Etel Adnan proposes mobile environmental imaginaries that rely on critical notions of belonging and offer alternative perspectives on how meaningful place-attachments can be formed in the context of displacement. In doing so, the ecopoetries of migration I discuss in *Ecopoetic Place-Making* envision ways of being in the world that are both more eco-ethical and more just.

Moving Beyond the Figure of the Climate Refugee in Contemporary Poetry

Like contemporary filmmakers and novelists, many contemporary poets too approach the interdependences between global environmental change and human mobility by evoking the figure of the climate refugee. A well-known example is the Marshallese poet and climate activist Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner who performed one of her poems about climate refugees, "Dear Matafele Peinem," at the opening ceremony of the United Nations Climate Summit in 2014. Later included in Jetñil-Kijiner's debut collection *Iep Jaltōk: Poems from a Marshallese Daughter* (2017), "Dear Matafele Peinem" draws attention to the threat that rising sea-levels pose to small island nations and their Indigenous populations, who "will wander / rootless/ with only / a passport / to call home" (70). The poem is addressed to the poet's daughter and promises the child that "no one's gonna become/ a climate change refugee" (71), only to retract that promise, at least partly, immediately afterwards: "or should i say/ no one else" (71). If there is hope in the poem that the drowning of the Marshall Islands and similar places may still be prevented so her daughter will not be displaced and lose access to the land her ancestors inhabited, it arises at least in part from the speaker's anger and desperation over world leaders' reluctance to take the necessary measures to protect Indigenous lives and cultures, an anger and desperation partially concealed in the poem for the child's sake but nonetheless articulated through the careful use of imagery and insistent placement of line-breaks.

Desperation and anger also play a role in Niyi Osundare's short poem "Katrina's Diaspora" (2011), which addresses the fate of those inhabitants of New Orleans displaced by the infamous 2005 category 5 hurricane in a detached yet strained voice. Focusing on the past rather than on the future, the Nigerian-born poet links the "desperate dislocation" (43) of African American families after Katrina to a longer history of Black dispersal and racism in the American "Babylon" (43), implying that

the population "*known to the Press as 'Katrina Refugees'*" (43; emphasis original) had been made "[h]omeless again" by being forced into "placeless destinations" (43). Awareness of a longer racialized history of anthropogenic environmental change and the structures of discrimination and oppression manifesting in histories of human displacement also permeates Craig Santos Perez's poem "Praise Song for Oceania" (2016). An Indigenous poet like Jetñil-Kijiner, Perez, whose work I discuss in my first chapter, first published "Praise Song" on the occasion of World Oceans Day 2016. Rather than concentrating primarily on climate refugees, his poem evokes many different kinds of environmental change and environmental degradation as well as many different kinds of displacement, migration, and mobility. It thus exemplifies the kind of poetry I analyze in *Ecopoetic Place-Making*.

Drawing from the poem "The Sea is History" by Derek Walcott, whose epic poem *Omeros* (1990) I discuss in my third chapter, Perez's "Praise Song" depicts the ocean as a complex ecosystem and as a repository of histories shaped by "*migrant routes*" and "*submarine roots*" (*Habitat Threshold* 68, emphasis original). In a tone that is simultaneously sincere and bitterly ironic, the poem praises the ocean for its "*capacity to survive/ our trawling boats*" and its ability "*to dilute/ our heavy metals and greenhouse gases/ sewage and radioactive waste/ pollutants and plastics*" (67, emphasis original). More than that, in a variation on the central theme of Walcott's poem, Perez figures the ocean not merely as "history" but as a "*library of drowned stories*" and "*vast archive of desire*" (67, emphasis original) that holds "*lost treasures*" but also constitutes a "*watery grave*" for more than one "*human reef of bones*" (67, emphasis original). Alluding to many different (hi)stories of violence and displacement, but also emphasizing that these (hi)stories must be (re)discovered and (re)told in order to unfold their transformative power, Perez evokes the environmental devastation and human suffering caused by centuries of Euro-American colonial exploitation in the Pacific and beyond. In his poem, the figure of the climate refugee appears as one among many other human subjects whose relationship to the more-than-human world has been marked by experiences of mobility and histories of displacement. It is this kind of multidirectional and multifaceted poetry—a "polytemporal" and "polyspatial" poetry (Ramazani, *Poetry in a Global Age* 8) that considers a broad range of mobilities and an equally broad range of natural phenomena—that I focus on in this book.

When Perez's poem mentions "*those who map you [Oceania] aqua nullius*" and "*scar*" the ocean's "*middle passages*" (*Habitat Threshold* 66, emphasis original), the harm caused by "*lustful tourism*" (68, emphasis original), or the increasing vulnerability of the inhabitants of "*coastal villages*" and "*low-lying islands*" (69, emphasis original) to rising sea levels, it distinguishes different kinds of environmental harm and different kinds of mobility. It also introduces an important distinction between the perpetrators and the victims of exploitation and injustice. Implying that this distinction is crucial but not necessarily clear-cut or stable, "Praise Song" moves from a universal "we" at the beginning of the poem ("our *heavy metals and green-*

house gases") to a very specific collective "we" at the end of the poem: Indigenous peoples of the world's ocean(s). Their cultures, identities, and everyday lives, the poem suggests, are bound to the ocean not only as an endangered ecosystem and a place of many different (hi)stories and cultural practices but also as a powerful idea that gestures toward more sustainable futures. Asking the world's oceans for forgiveness for the destruction caused by (parts of) humanity, the speaker expresses the "*hope*" (71, emphasis original) that the Indigenous peoples of Oceania will unite around a "*common heritage*" (72, emphasis original) and a shared commitment to protect this endangered "*blue planet / one world ocean*" (72, emphasis original). While the poem thus strongly suggests that the "*trans-oceanic / past present future flowing / through our blood*" (72, emphasis original) it conjures through song must be centered on Indigenous experiences and ways of knowing, it also implies that the alternative understanding and enactment of human-nature relations that this transoceanic community is based on may have important lessons to offer to non-Indigenous peoples who are looking for, or perhaps even depending for survival on developing more sustainable ways of living with the ocean.

Those invested in the project of environmental and cultural restoration that stands at the heart of Perez's text and the alternative way of living with the ocean it imagines, "Praise Song" insists, must take seriously the ocean both as a physical place and as a "*powerful metaphor*" (*Habitat Threshold* 72, emphasis original), that is, as a material and as a socio-cultural formation with many different, at times conflicting meanings. By integrating all of these dimensions into his poem Perez evokes a "*vision of belonging*" (72, emphasis original) that is in equal measures constituted and disrupted by environmental degradation and (forced) mobilities. This mobile vision of belonging relies on the archival as well as the utopian possibilities of poetry and it points to what Perez, in a 2017 version "Praise Song" published in *The Missing Slate*, refers to as a "horizon/ of care" (n. p.). This horizon of care is ecological insofar as it insists that human and non-human destinies are inextricably entwined and that any hope for more sustainable and more just futures must be based on radically new ethical principles and political arrangements that poetry can help us to imagine. As Perez's poem illustrates, environmental perspectives that acknowledge the experiences and histories of displacement as well as the diverse cultures of mobility of Indigenous and otherwise marginalized peoples are central to such an endeavor.

Ecopoetic Place-Making examines the complex visions of belonging and the ecological horizons of care evoked in contemporary American poetry about nature and mobility. It explores how poetic texts written by poets with different migratory backgrounds reimagine human-nature relations from various perspectives of mobility. The migrant poets I read are CHamoru poet Craig Santos Perez, Anglo-American poet Juliana Spahr, Caribbean poet Derek Walcott, Kashmiri-American poet Agha Shahid Ali, and Lebanese American poet Etel Adnan. The relationships of migratory subjects to the natural world, the works of these poets insist, are complex and

fraught with histories of gendered, class-based, racial, colonial, and indeed environmental violence, raising questions about conventional notions of place-based belonging, identity, and community as well as about what it means for people on the move to encounter and engage with the more-than-human world. Instead of focusing primarily on experiences of deterritorialization or a sense of placelessness of the kind often evoked in relation to (post)modern American literature in general and migrant literatures in particular (see Halttunen, Harding, Zelinsky, or Verghese), the poets I have selected evoke human-nature relations that are meaningful in environmental terms not merely *in spite of*, but precisely *because of* the experiences of mobility that shape these relations. Their works counter the idea that literatures of migration are produced predominantly in an abstract, decidedly urban space of cultural hybridity and transnational networks in which "physical geography is of no longer much importance" (Verghese xiv), even if, as Indian-American migrant poet Abraham Verghese puts it in his foreword to *Contours of the Heart: South Asians Map North America* (1996) by referencing William Carlos Williams, there are moments when "everything in [the migrant poet's] world seems to depend on the jasmine blooming" (xv).

The idea that migratory lives and literatures are doubly removed from the natural world is problematic from an environmental standpoint, because, as ecocritics have long argued in other contexts, such a view feeds into the very "crisis of the imagination" (Buell, *The Environmental Imagination* 2) that is at least partly responsible for our present global environmental crisis. Describing (post)modern cultures in general and migrant cultures in particular as always already deterritorialized and detached from place constitutes a reductive overgeneralization that prevents close examination of how these texts represent the natural world and non-urban environments. As Ursula K. Heise famously noted in *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet* (2008), processes of globalization have not done away with forms of culture invested in a "sense of place" (8). Rather, they have led to the production of "new forms of culture that are premised [….] on ties to territories and systems that are understood to encompass the planet as a whole" (*Sense of Place* 10). While I consider notions of "ecocosmopolitanism" (Heise, *Sense of Place* 10) when they are expressed in the poetry I analyze, I am overall more interested in how "local places," including those whose names we do not frequently hear and whose coordinates we are not sure about, continue to matter in contemporary American poetries of migration. This choice results from the fact that, even though the works of poetry I discuss here contradict the idea that experiences of migration must necessarily lead to a sense of placelessness, they also do not necessarily evoke a "sense of planet" (Heise, *Sense of Place* 21). Instead, they imagine meaningful "glocal" human-place relations in the context of mobility, that is, human-place relations that acknowledge the powerful pull that the local continues to exert on the global and vice versa (Heise, *Sense of Place* 51; Buell, *The Future*

92) together with the continued importance that local natural environments hold for migratory subjects.

The poets whose work I analyze in *Ecopoetic Place-Making* are migrants of various national, cultural, ethnic, and racial backgrounds. Highly educated and affiliated with institutions of higher education both in the U.S. and elsewhere, they write from migratory positions of relative privilege, taking a long and often critical view of American ideas and practices surrounding issues of nature and mobility. Rather than serving as a refuge from the human world or as sites for detached contemplation, the landscapes they evoke in their poems reveal a complex layering of place and equally complex histories of displacement, calling into question traditional definitions of place as a closed and stable site of human attachment and engagement. Their poems feature migrant speakers who struggle to develop, regain, or maintain meaningful relationships to the more-than-human world as they explore the many ways in which human-nature relations are shaped by physical and geographical movement, whether voluntary or forced. By creatively reimagining such relationships from varying perspectives of im/mobility, a poetic project I conceptualize in this book as *ecopoetic place-making*, their works testify to the potential as well as the limits of poetry as a means to produce environmental imaginaries fit for our contemporary age of converging global environmental and mobility crises. By engaging with issues of nature and mobility in the United States in the context of longer histories of violence as well as the pervasive structures of oppression these histories have produced, their poems evoke ecopoetic place-making as a restorative or constitutive practice for more-than-human communities and human-nature relations in a particular place. At the same time, they evoke contexts in which practices of place-making turn destructive, that is to say, contexts in which place-making becomes place-*taking*, harming rather than supporting the flourishing of local environments and communities. When read with a double focus on issues of nature and mobility, the works of contemporary American poetry that I analyze in *Ecopoetic Place-Making* reveal both the potential and the limits of ecopoetic place-making in light of different experiences of mobility and histories of displacement. In doing so, they not only point to less parochial and more inclusive forms of belonging and community formation; they also serve as valuable sources of environmental insight for our contemporary world on the move.

Theorizing Nature and Mobility in Contemporary American Poetry

Employing the terms *nature* and *mobility* side by side in an analysis of contemporary American poetry may seem paradoxical in that the term and idea of *nature* has largely fallen out of favor with scholars in American studies, while *mobility* is one of the field's current buzzwords. Ecocritics, too, have been urged to let go of the idea

of "nature" after environmental thinkers proclaimed its untimely end.[1] In his influential study *Ecology without Nature* (2007), Timothy Morton argues, for example, that "the very idea of 'nature' which so many hold dear will have to wither away in an 'ecological' state of human society. Strange as it may sound, the idea of nature is getting in the way of properly ecological forms of culture, philosophy, politics, and art" (1). Like other ecocritics before and after him, Morton rejects the idea of "nature" in favor of that of "ecology" because, as he sees it, the former "impedes a proper relationship with the earth and its lifeforms [… that would] include ethics and science" due to its "confusing, ideological intensity" (*Ecology* 2). While I do not mean to deny that a more nuanced understanding of the principles of ecology and a more in-depth knowledge of the findings of contemporary environmental science can produce more sustainable and ethical ways of living, history as well as current public debates about climate change teach that they do not necessarily do so. As many scholars writing on the subject have noted, the knowledge produced by the natural and environmental sciences, like any form of knowledge, can all too easily be decoupled from ethics or yoked to political agendas that clash with principles of sustainability and, even more frequently perhaps, with principles of environmental justice. What is more, scientific knowledge can easily be ignored or, even when understood, fail to move people to action. A more complex understanding of ecology is thus by no means a guarantee for more "ecological" forms of ethics or politics. Reversely, I would argue that even if the idea of "nature" possesses a "confusing, ideological intensity," as Morton notes, it can nonetheless produce what environmentalists or ecocritics would view as a "proper" ethics and politics: one that secures a better future for life on this planet, or simply *a future* as one might have to phrase it at this point in history. For such an environmental ethics and politics to emerge and to remain viable in a world in which science sometimes matters less for social and political processes than other forms of culture and in which both the most environmentally beneficial and the most harmful politics are not necessarily based on any easily recognizable or coherent ethics, ideas of nature and conceptualizations of human-nature relations must be discussed in a manner that does justice to their complexity and encourages a critical interrogation of the histories and ideologies that shape them. Poetry, I posit, is a medium that is well suited for precisely this purpose.

1 For a detailed discussion of arguments concerning the "end of nature" by such theorists as Bill McKibben (*The End of Nature*, 1989), Carolyn Merchant (*The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* 1980) and Bruno Latour (*The Politics of Nature*, 2004) and its relation to the "end of history" famously proclaimed ("The End of History" 1989) and then again retracted (*Identity: The Demand for Dignity and the Politics of Resentment*, 2018) by Francis Fukuyama, see, for example, Margaret Ronda's chapter on "Mourning and Melancholia at the End of Nature" from her study *Remainders: American Poetry at Nature's End* (2018).

In *The Ecological Thought* (2012), Morton goes into more detail about why he charges the idea of "nature" with a "confusing, ideological intensity": again like others before and after him, he associates it with "hierarchy, authority, harmony, purity, neutrality, and mystery" (3), which is why, he comments, he sometimes uses "a capital *N* to highlight [nature's] 'unnatural' qualities" (3). This distinction between "nature" and "Nature" is a crucial one to make, and one that must be made consistently for the concept to be useful. In what follows, I use the word *Nature* with a capitalized *N* to refer to what philosopher Kate Soper has described as the "metaphysical concept" (*What is Nature* 155). This metaphysical Nature is also what ecocritic Lawrence Buell—in drawing on cultural critic Raymond Williams—identifies as "the capitalized Nature of classical mythology or eighteenth-century Deism" (Buell, *The Future* 143), which has lived on in American (proto-)environmental discourse from the Enlightenment onward. In order to distinguish this metaphysical idea of Nature from the material world of physical experience, I refer to the latter by using the term *nature* with a small *n*. This material nature includes what Soper calls the "realist concept" (*What is Nature* 155) of nature, that is, the "structures, processes and causal powers that are constantly operative within the world" (155) or, put differently, the ecological systems and phenomena studied by science. It also encompasses the "'lay' or 'surface' concept" (Soper 156) of nature, that is, the "ordinarily observable features of the world" (156), or the nonhuman environment we encounter every day, during a walk in the neighborhood, our daily car drive or bicycle ride to work, or a weekend hike. Contemporary American poetry invested in nature and mobility features all of these dimensions of N/nature. Indeed, the works of poetry I discuss in *Ecopoetic Place-Making* provide deeply generative material for analysis exactly because they engage not only with the natural world as observed by more or less mobile subjects, or with the material ecologies that are examined in ever more detail by science, but because they also engage with mythical Nature as it has been contemplated, whether skeptically or reverently, by philosophers and poets through the ages. In this sense, then, I am interested less in the death or impossibility of *nature* in the Anthropocene than in the afterlife of *Nature* and in the presence (and indeed in some cases the strange possibilities and utter aliveness) of material and observable *natures* in contemporary American poetry of migration.

Ever since the emergence of ecocriticism as a scholarly discipline, ecocritics have engaged critically with the many different dimensions and meanings of N/nature. They have asked how notions of an essential dichotomy between human beings and the natural world must be rethought, when technoscientific advances are allowing biogenetic manipulations of unprecedented degree and when micropollutants whose long-term effects on the human body are yet to be determined have been proven to travel as freely between ecosystems as they travel between ecosystems and our bodies. Already before the so-called materialist turn in the humanities, ecocritics had challenged ideas of nature as that which is separate

from us or that which is *not* us. Drawing from earlier ecofeminist and Marxist-feminist theorizations of materiality as well as from New Materialist paradigms, Stacy Alaimo's influential study *Bodily Natures* (2010), for instance, demonstrates the porosity of the boundaries between human and nonhuman "natures" in an effort to gauge "the possibilities for more robust and complex conceptions of the materiality of human bodies and the more-than-human world" (2). Such a reconceptualization of materiality is necessary, she argues, because in an age of global environmental crisis, ethics are "not merely social but material" (Alaimo, *Bodily Natures* 2), which is to say that they depend on "the emergent, ultimately unmappable landscapes of interacting biological, climatic, economic, and political forces" (2). Acknowledging the porosity of bodily selves vis-à-vis the world that environs them, Alaimo emphasizes, is "an ethical matter" that must ultimately lead to an "epistemological shift" in the form of a dismantling of anthropocentric and environmentally destructive fantasies about human mastery over the physical world (*Bodily Natures* 17). Discussing Muriel Rukeyser's groundbreaking poem sequence "Book of the Dead" (1938) amongst other environmental(ist) texts, Alaimo insists that literature and other forms of cultural expression can help to produce such an epistemological shift by fostering critical awareness about the precarious position of human bodies in an increasingly toxic world. My readings of Juliana Spahr's and Etel Adnan's poetry demonstrate how such an argument can be made for poetry that is invested in issues of nature and mobility. In related but also very different ways, the works of these two poets of migration demonstrate that the N/nature represented in contemporary American poetry can come to encompass the precarious materiality of human bodies, including the cognitive-somatic processes that take place in these bodies. Put differently, contemporary American poetry about nature and mobility not only features metaphysical Nature, nonhuman ecologies, and everyday physical environments, it sometimes also foregrounds entanglements of more-than-human and human natures.

While contemporary American poetries of migration evoke all kinds of human and nonhuman natures, they remain particularly invested in everyday experiences of nonhuman environments. In order to analyze these everyday experiences of nonhuman environments, I draw on theories of place as discussed in spatial and environmental literary studies. My use of the term *place*—like that of many ecocritics—follows human geographer Yi-Fu Tuan, who defines place as "an organized world of meaning" (*Space and Place* 179) characterized by a certain "boundedness" (54) and as space made "concrete" by experience (18) and memory (154). Although I rely on Tuan's basic distinction between space and place, I take issue, as others have before me, with his descriptions of place as a "pause" (6) and as "a calm center of established values" (54) that stands in contrast to "space" which he defines as "that which allows movement" (6). While I thus use the term *place* because it denotes concreteness, boundedness, and a fullness of meaning, I also draw from theoriza-

tions of place that do not define places as the obverse of mobility, such as Doreen Massey's influential description of a "global sense of place" ("A Global Sense of Place" 28; *For Space* 131). As Karen Halttunen noted in her 2005 presidential address to the American Studies Association (ASA) on the continued importance of questions of place for the field, Massey's conceptualization of place is productive for cultural and literary analysis because it is "not closed but open, not essentialist but hybrid, not reactionary but progressive, not static but dynamic" (Halttunen, "Groundwork" 2). In Massey, as well as in the works of scholars inspired by her writing, a global sense of place is frequently conceived of as an urban phenomenon, that is, as the product of human engagement with the city as a cosmopolitan space (Halttunen "Groundwork" 2). It would be wrong to claim that this idea does not register in contemporary American poetries of migration. Indeed, I could have analyzed collections that depict human and nonhuman mobilities in urban environments, such as Ed Roberson's *City Eclogue* (2006), Aracelis Girmay's *Kingdom Animalia* (2011), or Harriett Mullen's *Urban Tumbleweed* (2013). Yet, one of the main objectives of this study is to show how non-urban environments and their representations in poetries of migration, too, can become sites of an open, hybrid, progressive, and dynamic sense of place, when reconsidered from perspectives of mobility.

One of the reasons why analyses of space and place in literature frequently focus on urban environments is because they tend to rely heavily on thinkers such as Michel de Certeau, Henry Lefebvre, and Edward Soja, who developed their theories of spatiality by analyzing the (post)modern city. More useful for my purposes, then, are approaches to place offered by critical regionalism, a field of study that investigates representations of complex place-formations and non-urban environments by foregrounding issues of race and histories of dispossession. Taking seriously the interventions of critical regionalism for a study of contemporary American poetry about nature and mobility means reading representations of U.S.-American places in these works through what Stephen Tatum has described as a "newer field imaginary" ("Postfrontier Horizons" 461)—an imaginary that "involves subaltern voices and alternative histories" (461). One of the matters at stake in such a newer field imaginary, Tatum indicates, then, is a thoroughgoing exploration of how identity affects people's relationship to place and vice versa.

As Krista Comer contends in "Exceptionalism, Other Wests, Critical Regionalism" (2011), "one unstated issue under discussion [in critical regionalism and New Western criticism] concerns identity and its politics and their relationship to an *ethics of place*" (160, emphasis added). In Comer's understanding, such an ethics of place should be less oriented toward the non-human "environment" and more "toward the interface among people, communities or places and their constitution with and through discourse, materialist geography, and in-place structures of feeling" (173). One larger point I want to make in *Ecopoetic Place-Making* is that in an age of global environmental crisis shaped by human (and nonhuman) mass migration

within and across borders, an ethics of place invested in the multidimensional associations between people, communities, and places also has to be an environmental ethics of place invested in the more-than-human world. In particular, it has to be an ethics of place that interrogates how histories of displacement and experiences of mobility, together with "in-place structures of feeling" (Comer 173), affect humans' relationships to and engagements with the nonhuman world of the places they encounter.

In the preface to his poetry collection *No Nature* (1992), poet Gary Snyder notes that nature is not easily defined because it "will not fulfill our conceptions or assumptions" but instead "dodge our expectations and theoretical models" (v). The same can be said about mobility. Yet, mobilities must be studied, not least since increased mobility, or perhaps rather increasingly conflicted regimes of im/mobility, are often taken to be one of the defining characteristics of our current age, such as when James Clifford describes postmodernity as an era defined by a "new world order of mobility" (*Routes* 1).[2] The nascent field of cultural mobility studies provides the necessary tools to discuss the different forms of mobility that characterize this new world order of mobility and their representations in literature. In *On the Move: Mobility in the Modern Western World* (2006), human geographer and poet Tim Cresswell productively suggests that "*movement* can be thought of as abstracted mobility (mobility abstracted from contexts of power)" (2; emphasis original). Mobility, in this conception, is movement in social, political, and cultural contexts of power and thus "movement plus meaning" (Cresswell 3). Mobility, Cresswell outlines, is "practiced," "experienced," and "embodied" (3), which makes it "the dynamic equivalent of *place*" (3; emphasis original). If one views mobility not merely as "a thing in the world, an empirical reality" (3), but in fact as "socially produced motion" (3), any analysis of mobility has to pay attention to how the meanings of different kinds of mobility are "conveyed through a diverse array of representational strategies" (3). Contemporary mobility scholarship, in other words, is situated at "the interface between mobile physical bodies on the one hand, and the represented mobilities on the other" (Cresswell 4).

Mimi Sheller and John Urry, two key figures of the "new mobilities paradigm" in the social sciences, too, emphasize that the analysis of mobilities requires both interrogation of "the relation between local and global 'power geometries'" and an

2 While scholars such as James Clifford, Rosi Braidotti (*Nomadic Subjects* 2), or Kevin Robins ("Encountering Globalization"195) link mobility to globalization and thus to postmodernity, other scholars delineate a longer history for our current "world order of mobility." Marshall Berman (*All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity*, 1988), Zygmunt Baumann (*Liquid Modernity*, 2000), Tim Cresswell (*On the Move*, 2006, esp. 10–20) and Richard Sennett (*Flesh and Stone: The Body and the City in Western Civilization*, 1994, esp. 255–56) regard mobility as a phenomenon that emerged with the Renaissance and Enlightenment and was transformed during the nineteenth and twentieth century.

examination of the relation "between the physical and symbolic dimensions of cultures of mobility" (211). By investigating such relations, Sheller and Urry suggest, the new mobility studies they propose can help us understand how people imagine "the 'atmosphere of place'" together with how they experience the "'feeling' of particular kinds of movement" (218), questions, they note, that are also "often a concern in the *poetry and literature of exile and displacement*" (218; emphasis added). By analyzing the works of contemporary American poets of migration who foreground both the atmosphere and feeling of place, or what ecocritics will often call "sense of place" (see Buell, *The Future* 77; Heise *Sense of Place*), then, my study not only draws from insights of new mobilities scholarship in cultural studies and the social sciences; it also seeks to generate insights of value for the critical debates surrounding mobile cultures and cultural mobility in these fields as well as in the humanities at large.

American studies, and especially American studies in Europe, is one of the scholarly disciplines in which cultural and literary mobility studies have generated ongoing and fruitful debates.[3] In his introduction to *Cultural Mobility: A Manifesto* (2009), a collaborative publication by literary and cultural studies scholars from North America and Europe, Stephen Greenblatt emphasizes the need to "rethink fundamental conceptions about the fate of culture in an age of global mobility" ("Cultural Mobility" 1–2). He calls for an examination of "cultural mobility" across disciplinary limits and especially in literary studies, where, as he asserts, the phenomenon of mobility has so far only been addressed in passing ("Cultural Mobility" 3–4). In his closing statement to the same publication, Greenblatt establishes several axioms for the study of cultural mobility in and beyond literature, axioms indebted to the work of scholars such as John Urry and Mimi Sheller. In drawing from sociology, geography, and adjacent fields, Greenblatt argues, literary and cultural mobility studies must examine the "literal" or physical "*movements* of people, objects, images, texts, and ideas" as well as the "metaphorical" movements connected to these mobilities "A Mobility Studies Manifesto" 250; emphasis original). Scholars invested in literary and cultural mobility studies, he suggests, must examine how structural and institutional constraints, as well as the pull of the local, shape experiences and representations of mobilities ("A Mobility Studies Manifesto" 252) and theorize how cultures of mobility remain "strikingly enmeshed in particular times and places" (252), both symbolically and materially.

3 See, for instance, Alexandra Ganser's study *Roads of Her Own: Gendered Space and Mobility in American Women's Road Narratives, 1970–2000* (2009); the essay collection *Pirates, Drifters, Fugitives: Figures of Mobility in the US and Beyond* (2012), edited by Heike Paul, Alexandra Ganser, and Katharina Gerund; Ann Brigham's monograph *American Road Narratives: Reimagining Mobility in Literature and Film* (2015); and Julia Leyda's recent study *American Mobilities: Geographies of Class, Race, and Gender in US Culture* (2016).

Examining mobilities along with their constraints and "enmeshments"—a term popularized in the environmental and mobility humanities not least due to Timothy Morton's use of the metaphor of the "mesh" in *The Ecological Thought* (2012)—requires paying close attention to the specific material, historical, social, and cultural contexts that shape represented mobilities as well as to the human-nature relations these representations (re-)produce. To give examples from the texts discussed in this study: it makes a difference whether the mobile subject depicted in a given text is a Black Caribbean poet who takes a road-trip through the U.S.-South to visit the place where the Trail of Tears started, as in one section of Derek Walcott's book-length poem *Omeros* (1990), or whether the mobile subject is a transnational migrant and air-traveler who contemplates the desert landscapes and colonial history of the American Southwest during take-off, as in Agha Shahid Ali's poem "Leaving Sonora" (1991). It matters whether the mobile subject is a Lebanese exile walking by the Pacific Ocean and remembering the Mediterranean Sea of her childhood, as in Etel Adnan's poetry, or an Anglo-American woman from the continental United States who becomes acutely aware of her complicity in existing structures of colonial domination and capitalist exploitation after she moves to Hawai'i, as in Juliana Spahr's works. Just as the differences in the represented mobilities and enmeshments matter, so does exploring the differences between the environmental imaginaries of mobility that emerge in the texts of migrant poets who are positioned differently in relation to the social, cultural, and physical environments they move to, through, and away from.

While scholars working in third wave postcolonial and transnational ecocriticism have been discussing places as porous formations open to all kinds of transnational movements at least since the early 2000s (Slovic 7), issues surrounding human mobility have only more recently become a matter of more systematic investigation in these fields. In such writings, the concept of "migration" has sometimes been favored, because, as Ursula K. Heise points out, it is "more ecologically grounded" than other concepts linked to geographical mobility such as "nomadism" or "vagabondage" (*Sense of Place* 31). In one of the landmark studies of second-wave ecocriticism, *The Future of Environmental Criticism* (2005), Lawrence Buell called on ecocritics to account for the ways in which displacement, diaspora, and migration challenge traditional notions of "sense of place" and sustainable living (64). Two scholars in particular, one might argue, have responded to this call to action, addressing the revision of place-sense through displacement in ways that are especially relevant for my study. Each in their own way, Rob Nixon and Elizabeth DeLoughrey (the latter often in collaboration with other scholars) critique traditional notions of place and place-attachment in environmental literary criticism and in the process have generated environmental theories of displacement that acknowledge the role of human and nonhuman mobilities in the production of places and the formation of postcolonial as well as transnational ecologies.

Rather than being viewed primarily as an individual experience or a particular perspective related to geographical movement, displacement has sometimes been discussed as a condition that the subject suffers either as a result of the legacies of colonialism or as a result of globalization.[4] Displacement in this sense is not, or not primarily, the result of human mobility. Instead, it is the result of living in a place that has either historically been affected by disruptive mobility regimes, such as colonization and settler colonialism, or in a place that is traversed by so many global flows of goods, peoples, and ideas that the very bases of place-attachment—meaningful political, social, cultural, and ecological relations—have been lost. In his influential study *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (2011), Rob Nixon draws on this logic when he discusses what he calls "displacement in place" (17). Displacement here takes on the meaning of an environmental disenfranchisement linked to immobilization and experienced by those at the margins of society, whether for economic reasons or due to racial discrimination. According to Nixon, such "displacement in place" is a consequence of past and present acts of colonial violence and expresses itself in destructive human-nature relationships that cast "displaced" social groups as both victims of environmental injustice and as accessories to or even the primary perpetrators of environmental destruction (*Slow Violence* 17–22). While it is important to acknowledge such dynamics of "displacement without moving" (Nixon, *Slow Violence* 19), it is equally crucial to distinguish them from experiences of physical displacement linked to geographic mobility. One primary aim of this study is to explore the conceptually distinct, yet inter-linked phenomena of displacement with and without movement. Another is to investigate the varying effects that these displacements in place and between places have on human-nature relationships in the United States and, more specifically, the effects they have on the environmental imaginaries emerging in the works of contemporary American poets of migration.

More so than Nixon, Elizabeth DeLoughrey reflects on the environmental significance of displacement between places, that is, of displacement as a form of geographical and physical movement. In her writing on Caribbean and Pacific literatures and postcolonial as well as Indigenous ecologies, DeLoughrey repeatedly emphasizes that, as she and George B. Handley put it in their introduction to *Postcolonial Ecologies* (2011), "attachment to the land or localism itself is not an inherently ethical or ecological position" (6). Challenging environmental ideals of place-attachment and localism, many of DeLoughrey's publications interrogate how displace-

4 Displacement understood in this way bears a certain similarity with what John Tomlinson describes as "deterritorialization" (*Globalization and Culture* 9), that is, a condition affecting some places and peoples more than others, in which the "complex connectivity" that characterizes globalized modernity "weakens the ties of culture to place" in ways that underscore the "simultaneous penetration of local worlds by distant forces, and the dislodging of everyday meanings from their 'anchors' in the local environment" (Tomlinson 29).

ments and migrations of various kinds have affected and continue to affect the natural environment in the Caribbean and other (formerly) colonized island territories and how Caribbean literature in particular has been struggling to come to terms with the effects of "diaspora and transplantation" (DeLoughrey and Handley, "Introduction" 7). In her contribution to the *Routledge Companion to Anglophone Caribbean Literature* (2011), for instance, DeLoughrey points out that "Caribbean literature is deeply engaged with the history of human and plant diasporas, rendering a complex cultural ecology and a dialogic imagination" ("Ecocriticism" 266). This kind of engagement of literature with different "diasporas" is environmentally suggestive, she argues, because foregrounding these histories of displacement "calls attention to our very assumptions about what is a natural landscape" ("Ecocriticism" 266). Following DeLoughrey, I am exploring the complex cultural ecologies produced by diaspora and displacement in the Caribbean (Walcott), in the Pacific (Perez, Spahr), and in the continental United States (Spahr, Walcott, Ali, Adnan).

Due to the region's complex histories of displacement, I argue in drawing on DeLoughrey and her collaborators, Caribbean literature is prone to troubling received notions about human-nature relations. As a result, it generates environmental imaginaries that can provide insights applicable to other places, such as the United States. As I demonstrate in my study, Derek Walcott's poetry is a particularly salient example for the difficult yet ultimately productive translation processes that take place when Caribbean "postcolonial" environmental sensibilities are transposed onto U.S.-American geographies and into U.S.-American contexts. Linking issues of nature to questions of mobility in her scholarship about the Caribbean, which occasionally mentions Walcott, DeLoughrey raises questions that are pertinent for my reading of poems about landscapes, histories, and experiences of displacements in the settler-colonial United States. Which theories and concepts developed within the Caribbean postcolonial and environmental context can be productively transferred to the U.S. American context? Which ones cannot and why? In what ways would a "complex cultural ecology and a dialogic imagination" (DeLoughrey, "Ecocriticism" 266) concerned with U.S.-American landscapes and histories look different to one concerned with the Caribbean? How do images of "transplantation" and other textual strategies evoking human and "plant diasporas" change when they are transposed into literature focusing on the United States? My chapter on Walcott's long poem *Omeros* (1990), in which I trace the shift from a postcolonial to a transnational and ultimately planetary environmental imagination, addresses some of these questions.

Like many other ecocritics, I assume that humans turn to art in order to rethink their relationship to the more-than-human world, because "it is in art that the fantasies we have about nature take shape—and dissolve" (Morton, *Ecology* 1). In a similar fashion, I contend, we must examine the fantasies of mobility that take shape and dissolve in art—whether these fantasies involve notions of "[m]obility as progress,

as freedom, as opportunity, and as modernity, [… or notions of] mobility as shiftlessness, as deviance, and as resistance" (Cresswell, *On the Move* 1–2). Indeed, as I argue here, the terms *nature* and *mobility*, especially when used in the plural, are ideally suited for a study focused on the art of poetry, precisely because of their semantic range. Poetry, as the modernist American poet Marianne Moore famously observed, is the art of creating "imaginary gardens with real toads / in them" ("Poetry"). Arguably "the most deliberately figurative of activities" (Knickerbocker 5), poetry does not stand at a distance to the world; rather, it foregrounds "how to figure forth the world and what kind of figures and formal devices best dramatize the complex relationships between the human and nonhuman" (Knickerbocker 16). It deals with the real as well as with the imagined, with the histories, lived experiences, and the observable features of the world as much as with abstractions, fantasies, mythologies, and metaphysics. What is more, it can capture the clashing spatial and temporal scales of the Anthropocene. As David Farrier argues in *Anthropocene Poetics: Deep Time, Sacrifice Zones, and Extinction* (2019):

> Poetry can compress vast acreages of meaning into a small compass or perform the kind of bold linkages that would take reams of academic argument to plot; it can widen the aperture of our gaze or deposit us on the brink of transformation. In short, it can model an Anthropogenic perspective in which our sense of relationship and proximity (and from this, our ethics) is stretched and tested against the Anthropocene's warping effects. (5)

When I thus speak about *nature* and *mobility*—or rather, *natures* and *mobilities*—in analyzing contemporary American poetry, I do so because both terms have material, social, political, cultural, historical, and symbolic or figurative dimensions; each can carry many different meanings in different contexts; and each encompass different scales, ranging from the microscopic to the planetary.

Drawing from theorizations of nature and mobility in the fields of ecocriticism and mobility studies, four main sets of questions provide the starting point of my study: first, which kinds of *places and nonhuman natures* figure prominently in contemporary American poetries of migration and what issues of identity, community, and belonging do they foreground? Second, which kinds of *histories of displacement and experiences of mobility* are particularly prominent in these texts and which questions do they raise about humans' relations to the more-than-human world? Third, which kinds of *poetic strategies* are employed by poems that deal with natural environments and human mobilities? And, fourth, what kinds of *environmental imaginaries* emerge in the process? In order to address these questions, I explore the complex evocations of non-human environments, natures, and places in contemporary American poetry and the ways in which the poets I have selected imagine meaningful human-nature relations in light of human mobility, migration, and displacement. I argue that the works of poetry I analyze produce *mobile environmental imaginaries* by

engaging in a self-consciously *poetic fashioning* of human-nature relations in which all the material, social, cultural, as well as symbolic and figurative dimensions of nature and mobility come into play. It is this self-consciously poetic and environmentally suggestive fashioning of meaningful human-nature relations in light of different histories, experiences, and perspectives of mobility that I refer to as *ecopoetic place-making*.

Theorizing Ecopoetic Place-Making

The poetic works I discuss in my study engage in *place-making* from varying perspectives of mobility. Used primarily in the social sciences, anthropology, human geography, and urban planning, the term *place-making* refers to the act of creating culturally significant landscapes both for and by individuals and communities. As I analyze contemporary American poetries of migration, I am interested in how such acts of place-making in poetry and through poetry can become environmentally resonant. While there are many cultural practices that can be employed for place-making, poetic language and literature are a particularly effective tool for this purpose, as human-geographer Yi-Fu Tuan argues. In his essay "Language and the Making of Place" (1991), Tuan rejects the idea that places come into being because of "the material transformation of nature" (684). Instead, he suggests that practical activities of "speech" are an equally crucial "component of the total force that transforms nature into a human place" (Tuan, "Language" 685). Indeed, he urges scholars of place to take language seriously because it "enables us to understand [...] the *quality* (the personality or character) of place better, for that quality is imparted by, along with visual appearance and other factors, the metaphorical and symbolic powers of language" (694; emphasis original). Tuan here proposes what he calls a "narrative-descriptive approach" to "the process of place-making" (684). Building on Paul Ricoeur's phenomenology, Tuan explores how "individual words and, even more, sentences and larger units impart emotion and personality, and hence high visibility, to objects and places" (685). Although Tuan calls his approach to place-making "narrative-descriptive," he continuously stresses the importance of "language's metaphorical power" (685), indicating that works of poetry may be just as well, if not better suited for the project of place-making compared with everyday speech or narrative prose. Indeed, I would posit that prose narratives tend to have marked advantages when it comes to length and the portrayal of relationships over time. Poetry, by contrast, may be better suited for the purpose of place-making in cases where the many dimensions of N/nature and the multilayered histories of places—together with the multiple contexts and meanings of different forms of mobility—do not cohere into conventional forms of narrative. This may be the reason, then, why many of the poets I discuss combine narrative and poetic elements in their writing, such as when Spahr and

Adnan blur the boundaries of prose and poetry, when Perez integrates prose texts into his poetry or when Derek Walcott integrates poetic short forms into the long form of the epic. It may also be the reason for why all the works of poetry I discuss in this study exceed in some way or another the short form, whether because they consist of a book-length poem (Walcott), frequently make use of long poem sequences (Spahr, Adnan, Perez), or stem from a collection in which a significant number of the poems included cohere thematically (Ali). Contemporary American poetry about nature and mobility and concerned with practices of place-making tend toward longer forms, I suggest, to account for the multidimensional interrelations between different natures and mobilities as well as for the processual nature of place-making.

Often used in connection with concepts such as "place-attachment," "emplacement," or "sense of place," the term "place-making" began to appear more frequently in literary and cultural studies at the end of the first decade of the new millennium and under the influence of spatial and environmental criticism. In the introduction to her study *Migrant Sites: America, Place, and Diaspora Literatures* (2009), Dalia Kandiyoti, for example, draws attention to the "complexity of place-making" in the context of migration and suggests "translocality" as a lens through which to "view the production of place as a crossroads of practices and memories of multiple loci" (6). Following sociologists Hilary Cunningham and Josiah McC. Heyman, Kandiyoti views place-making as a cultural practice characterized by the "dual rubrics" of "[e]nclosure and movement" most poignantly manifested in borders and boundaries meant to allow or prevent particular forms of mobility (Kandiyoti 104; see also Cunningham and Heyman 295). Such a critical conceptualization of place-making is particularly useful for my analysis of Craig Santos Perez's poetry about Guam/Guåhan, which highlights moments of forced immobilization in the context of colonization and military occupation, and for my analysis of Spahr's poetry about Hawai'i, which repeatedly touches on matters of race-based exclusion and identity-based access to land.

More explicitly even than Kandyoti, Sarah Jaquette Ray comments on the links between mobility and place-making in her study *The Ecological Other* (2013). Discussing issues of immigration and environmental pollution in connection to the disenfranchisement of Native American peoples in the U.S.-American Southwest, Ray draws on such ecocritics as Rob Nixon to argue that an uncritical celebration of "place-rootedness implicitly renders the *dis*placed ecologically illegitimate" even as it "ignores the geopolitical conditions of their movement" (*The Ecological Other* 155; emphasis original). In order to find a way out of this impasse, Ray turns to the work of anthropologists Teresa M. Mares and Devon Peña, who provide an alternative to what Ray calls the "environmentalist fetishization of place" (*The Ecological Other* 156). Writing about environmental and food justice in the Southwest, Mares and Peña (2011) suggest that migrants engage in transnational forms of "place making" (199) in an effort to create viable links between places, personal identity, and their

community even while remaining mobile. Where Mares and Peña consider the role of food cultivation and food culture for migrants' place-making, I return to Lawrence Buell's claim that "[s]tory and song are often vital to the retention of place-sense under such conditions [as exile, migration, and displacement]" (*The Future* 64). Indeed, like many scholars of ecopoetry have done before me (see, for example, Bate, Knickerbocker, Keller *Recomposing Ecopoetics*, or Ronda), I propose that "song" rather than "story," and more precisely, the relative complexity and opacity of poetry (see Milne, *Poetry Matters* 5; Keller *Thinking Poetry* 2; Rigby 5) rather than the relative linearity and transparency of (conventional) narrative prose, may be particularly well suited for the production of viable environmental imaginaries in our current moment in history and for imagining/theorizing more inclusive and mobile forms of place-sense and place-engagement in the face of displacement.

Following Karen Halttunen, I view "place-making as an ongoing and always contested process" ("Groundwork" 4) and analyze contemporary American poetry about nature and mobility as one particular manifestation of "the creative variety of cultural practices employed for place-making" (4). Insomuch as my study foregrounds processes of place-making in poetry, it resembles Jim Cocola's monograph *Places in the Making: A Cultural Geography of American Poetry* (2016), which identifies a "poetics centered upon more particular and situated engagements with actual places and spaces" and thus a poetic tradition that is centered on place(-making) as distinct from "related traditions including landscape poetry, nature poetry, and pastoral poetry" (xi). Like Cocola, I am interested in works of poetry that posit "place as a pivotal axis of identification," unfold "at the juncture of the proximate and the remote and establishing translocal, planetary, and cosmic connections," and in the process go "beyond epic and lyric modes" (xi). Where Cocola discusses a broad range of poets and poetic traditions across the Americas and from modernism to the present, at times in relation to issues of mobility (see especially the book's section on "Translocalities"), my study focuses specifically on late twentieth- and early twenty-first century migrant poets who evoke the complex layering of American places, the ways various kinds of human mobilities affect nonhuman environments, and the human-nature relationships as well as environmental imaginaries that emerge from the encounters of mobile subjects with the nonhuman world. What is more, where Cocola adopts a spatial or geocritical approach by advocating for "cultural geography as a crucial mode of inquiry" (Cocola xi), even as he occasionally touches on environmental issues, I approach my primary texts from a distinctly ecocritical perspective in an effort to carve out the social and environmental significance of practices of poetic place-making in the context of mobility.

When I speak of *poetic* place-making rather than merely of place-making, I do so to distinguish the broad spectrum of possible "cultural practices employed for place-making" (Halttunen, "Groundwork" 4) from literary and more narrowly poetic ones. I also do so to differentiate between the various *non-poetic* practices of place-making

that can be *represented* in a poem from the practice of *poetic* place-making that the poem itself can *constitute*. By making these distinctions, I by no means intend to dismiss or belittle place-making activities such as gardening, hiking, taking a walk, or going bird watching, which are certainly well suited for many people, including migrants, who want or need to gain a better feeling and understanding of the place(s) they live in or move through. In fact, all of these activities appear frequently in the works of poets of migration. In particular, many of the migrant poets who write about the natural world consciously place themselves in a long line of American poets walking in nature, even as they complicate some of the racial, gendered, and class-based associations that come with the idea of the walking poet.[5] Evocations of non-poetic/non-literary place-making in poetry are interesting, because they can reveal the sexist, racist, classist, ageist, and ableist biases (more often intersectional than not) that make some forms of mobility and some cultural practices of place-making less accessible than others or outright dangerous for certain groups, such as when women hikers or Black birders experience harassment or even attacks, or when Indigenous people are kept away from their ancestral lands by private or government infrastructures of obstruction such as walls and fences. Problems of accessibility of a different kind become apparent in Etel Adnan's poetry, for example, when she alludes to the fact that her aging speaker is no longer able to climb the mountains or swim in the sea she so dearly loves and instead evokes the experience *in* poetry.

Again, the point is not to suggest that writing and publishing poetry are activities free of biases and exclusions. On the contrary, all the poets discussed in this study, but especially Craig Santos Perez, who writes about the occupied U.S. territory of Guam/Guåhan from an Indigenous perspective, and Juliana Spahr, who writes about Hawai'i from the perspective of a white continental settler, reflect in their poetry on who has access to certain places and who has the authority to write about certain histories of displacement in connection to certain kinds of environmental destruction. Still, it is one of my main arguments that practices of *poetic* place-making, that is, place-making by way of literary texts including but not limited to poetry, can be crucial under certain circumstances, circumstances that include different kinds of migration and forced displacement as well as cases of severe pollution and environmental destruction. Indeed, under circumstances that impede

5 Many of the most famous American writers and especially poets have written about walking in nature, including Henry David Thoreau, Walt Whitman, Emily Dickinson, John Muir, Wallace Stevens, Elizabeth Bishop, Theodore Roethke, and Gary Snyder. For a study on the concept of walking in American poetry, see, for example, Roger Gilbert's *Walks in the World: Representation and Experience in Modern American Poetry* (1991). For scholarly publications on the topic of walking in American literature and culture more broadly, see, among others, Michaela Keck's *Walking in the Wilderness: The Peripatetic Tradition in Nineteenth-Century American Literature and Painting* (2006) and *Peregrinations: Walking in American Literature* (2018) by Amy T. Hamilton.

meaningful human-nature relations, I argue, poetic place-making constitutes a viable alternative to other forms of place-making that require physical access to and close contact with particular natural environments plus one or several of the following: considerable financial means, leisure time, white(r) skin, the right passport, or a healthy (male) body.

Contemporary American poetries of migration frequently feature intertextual references to other works of literature invested in nature, mobility, and/or practices of place-making, a gesture that assigns literature a crucial role in the migrant's struggle for place-attachment without permanent emplacement. In my analysis, I thus often comment on instances of intertextuality, such as when Juliana Spahr evokes Walt Whitman, when Craig Santos Perez and Derek Walcott reference Charles Olson, or when Agha Shahid Ali's speaker quotes Emily Dickinson, Henry David Thoreau, or an ethno-botanical book about the Sonoran Desert. In all of these cases, the intertextual references highlight that reading (and writing) can help migrants, displaced peoples, and other mobile subjects to make sense of their relationships to places and to the more-than-human environments they encounter only in passing. Engaging with texts invested in nature, mobility, and (poetic) place-making allows mobile subjects to reflect critically on their own practices of (poetic) place-making. By foregrounding the potential and the limits of place-making in their works, their text can in turn help readers to imagine more inclusive notions of belonging, identity, and community and more sustainable relationships to the more-than-human world. At the same time, I argue, their texts help us to think through and develop more complex conceptualizations about what it means to live sustainable lives that not only account for and are enriched by the perspectives of migrants, exiles, refugees, and other displaced peoples but in fact depend on them for environmental insight.

Reading Contemporary American Ecopoetries of Migration

Discussing poets such as Derek Walcott, Agha Shahid Ali, or Etel Adnan under the rubric of "American poetry" is by no means the only or even necessarily the most obvious choice. I did not choose this classification because I want to make any claims about the poets' citizenship status or about their preferred or lived civic identities, all of which have been or could be debated with regard to most of the poets featured in this study. Instead, I deploy the designation "American poetry" because I focus on texts in the oeuvres of the chosen poets that prominently feature American places and American histories of displacement. The fact that I do so does not mean, though, that I disregard questions of identity and belonging. On the contrary, as my readings repeatedly make clear, the migrant poets whose works I analyze keep asking difficult questions about (place-based) identity, belonging, and community, especially where

existing models are restrictive, exclusionary, or otherwise disruptive to the lives of marginalized individuals and communities.

Part of the work of re-imagination and revision undertaken by the poets analyzed in *Ecopoetic Place-Making* entails examining what positions migrants and displaced peoples occupy in the nation as well as in the national imagination, in particular where this position is connected to imaginaries of N/nature or place. Reading contemporary poetry about nature and mobility thus means re-examining longstanding narratives of the U.S. as "Nature's Nation" and as "a Nation of Immigrants," that is, narratives of nature as a primary location of Americanization and narratives of mobility as a central element of individual as well as collective identity formation.[6] It also means challenging those discourses that continue to imagine the West as a "virgin land," centuries of European settlement as an "errand into the wilderness," or the male settler colonial subject as an "American Adam" who is destined to (re-)discover the "New World" and lay claim to its bountiful resources.[7] Indeed, some of the works of poetry I discuss explicitly talk back to these and related settler-colonial nationali(ist) narratives, such as when Derek Walcott revisions the figure of the American Adam in the context of Westward Expansion and Native American Removal, or when Craig Santos Perez critiques notions of Manifest Destiny in the context of twentieth- and twenty-first-century U.S. militarist and imperialist actions in the Pacific.

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6 For a discussion of the concept of "nature's nation," see Perry Miller's essay "The Romantic Dilemma" (1955), his influential study *Nature's Nation* (1967), and more recent publications such as Lloyd Willis's *Environmental Evasion: The Literary, Critical, and Cultural Politics of 'Nature's Nation'* (2011). For a conceptualization of the United States as a "nation of immigrants," see especially Oscar Handlin's *The Uprooted: The Epic Story of the Great Migrations that Made the American People* (1951).

7 Many of the cultural narratives these early Americanists identified were later challenged on the grounds of the histories and perspectives they omitted. The most famous revisionist critique published by representatives of the so-called Critical Myth and Symbol School (Paul *The Myths* 18) concerns Henry Nash Smith's *Virgin Land* (1950). While sensitive to issues of class, *Virgin Land* falls short in retrospective for not having reflected critically enough on the racist, sexist, and more broadly imperialist implications of the "collective representations" (vii) that the study discusses. In particular, as Smith himself later acknowledged, *Virgin Land* fails to adequately address the violence perpetrated against Native Americans throughout U.S. history and the gendered violence implicit in the myth of the "virgin land" (Smith "Symbol and Idea"). Richard Slotkin's *Regeneration Through Violence* (1973), one of the key texts of the Critical Myth and Symbol School, is concerned precisely with this history, highlighting the extent to which U.S.-American mythologies of nation-building have always depended on acts of extreme violence, especially against Indigenous peoples. In a similar corrective move, Annette Kolodny's highly influential study *The Lay of the Land* (1975) provides a feminist critique of the myth of the "virgin land" from the age of "discovery" onward, re-reading it as a fantasy of violent submission with highly problematic gendered connotations and environmental consequences.

Migrant poets such as Walcott, Ali, and Adnan are often either classified as postcolonial, transnational, diasporic or ethnic American poets and then analyzed according to the topics such a classification brings into focus. When discussing how their poetry addresses American natures and mobilities, the insights that these different critical perspectives provide are all worth considering, given how they foreground different understandings of human-place relations and mobility. I use the descriptive labels *migrant poets/poets of migration* because I want to argue that the poets I have selected approach questions of identity and belonging with a special sensibility resulting from their respective migratory experiences. While the result of their acts of ecopoetic place-making is anything but a secure sense of 'being American'—indeed one can claim that for Perez, Walcott, and Spahr, at least, ecopoetic place-making constitutes a way to resist or trouble such an idea—all five poets I discuss participate in ongoing debates about what "America," "being American," or writing "American poetry" means. In a more concrete sense, they also investigate where to draw the physical and symbolic borders of the territory known as the United States. Questions of geopolitics are particularly pertinent in the case of Craig Santos Perez, who writes about the unincorporated territory of Guam/Guåhan, a Pacific island occupied by the U.S. Military and, according to some, a colony of the United States (see, for example, Fojas, "Militarization," or Bevacqua and Bowman). In different yet related ways, questions of geopolitics are also relevant to Juliana Spahr's poetry about Hawai'i, and those passages in the poetry of Derek Walcott and Agha Shahid Ali where Native peoples appear, marking the United States as a settler-colonial space and neo-colonial empire. When I thus argue that the poets of migration I read in *Ecopoetic Place-Making* write "American" poetry, I do not do so to prevent questions that such a label raises about identity and belonging in the context of U.S. settler colonialism and imperialism but, on the contrary, to encourage them and, more even, to suggest that they are an inherent part of the issues addressed in contemporary poetries of migration.

For my study on nature and mobility in contemporary American poetry, I focus on poetries of migration, even though all the poets I read could also be classified more broadly as "poets of mobility." Yet, while such a framing would certainly be useful for other projects in the realm of poetry and mobility studies, it would be too broad for my purposes. Quite obviously, not all of the migrant poets I consider in *Ecopoetic Place-Making* are what one might conventionally refer to as "immigrant poets," a label that in the context of American studies is commonly used for literary works that feature movement across national borders with the intention of staying in the new place of residence. Such a narrower focus on immigrant poetry would of course be productive in other cases, but for my purposes it would be too limiting, not least because it would exclude Walcott and Adnan who kept moving internationally after first moving to the U.S. as well as Perez, who (despite his migrations between Guam/Guåhan, the continental United States, and Hawai'i) is of course any-

thing but an 'immigrant.' What is more, the label "immigrant literature," just like the labels "ethnic" or "multiethnic" literature (Shankar & Srikanth 371), is still often used primarily in reference to texts by writers of color, particularly when it is applied to contemporary literature. Thus, using the label "immigrant poetry" could have given readers the impression that the works of non-POC poets with a migratory background are not of interest for the questions I am investigating in this study. This is not the case, however. Indeed, the poetry of Juliana Spahr offers very relevant insights, I show in this volume, as would have the poetry of Eavan Boland, who has repeatedly engaged in her poetry with the natural world and her own migration from Ireland to the United States. Focusing on poetries of migration rather than on immigrant poetry, then, allows me to read the works of Derek Walcott, Agha Shahid Ali, and Etel Adnan side by side with the works of Juliana Spahr and Craig Santos Perez. In order to make such juxtapositions productive, I insist in my analysis on the varying social, political, and cultural contexts in which migrations and other kinds of mobilities can take place. Moreover, I try to account for the complex ways in which these varying social, political, and cultural contexts of migration affect the environmental imaginaries of mobility produced in the texts.

Reading contemporary American poetries of migration requires grounding discussions of nature and mobility not only in specific historical contexts but also in theories that help to unpack the sexist, racist, and imperialist assumptions inherent in those U.S-American national narratives that have been used to make "America," to make some people "Americans" while denying this identity to others, and to make the literatures of some groups "American" literature, while questioning that label in the case of others. Simultaneously, reading contemporary American poetries of migration requires acknowledging that both "location" and "mobility" have always been central to the "postcolonial moments of US-American history and culture" (Paul, *Mapping Migration* 17), that is, to moments in literary and cultural production that highlight "the contested nature of this nationality and the postcolonial aspects that work internally as well as internationally to revise, modify, and differentiate the claims of 'American' literature" (17). I am interested in such "postcolonial moments" found in contemporary poetries of migration, poetries that frequently reflect on the United States' colonial past and its present status as a *post*-colony in relation to Europe, as a settler-colonial space in relation to Indigenous America, and as a (crumbling) neocolonial empire in relation to the various territories it occupies or controls in some other manner.

Due to the complexities that arise from the simultaneous reality of the United States as a post-colony, a settler-colony, and a neo-colonial empire as well as a nation of immigrants and a destination for transnational migrants, an analysis of contemporary American poetries of migration must, as Indigenous scholar Jodi A. Byrd insists in *The Transit of Empire* (2011), avoid the conflation of two separate, if concomitant regimes of oppression: colonization and racialization. Drawing from Byrd, who

in turn draws from the late Afro-Caribbean poet Kamau Brathwaite, I thus distinguish between "settler, native, and arrivant" (xxx) in an effort to "reconceptualize space and history to make visible what imperialism and its resultant settler colonialisms and diasporas have sought to obscure" (Byrd xxx). Arrivants, as I define them here in building on, but also departing from definitions by Kamau Brathwaite, Sarah Dowling, and Jody Byrd, are racialized non-Indigenous individuals living in the United States who may or may not be part of the diaspora of a formerly colonized country.

In his acclaimed verse trilogy *The Arrivants: A New World Trilogy* (1973), Barbadian poet Kamau Brathwaite uses the term "arrivant" for people of African descent living in the Americas. Sarah Dowling follows this specific use in her study *Translingual Poetics: Writing Personhood under Settler Colonialism* (2018), when she distinguishes "the experiences of Indigenous peoples, diasporic communities, and arrivants" (6). In my study, however, I adopt Jodi Byrd's slightly broader use of the term, taking the designation "arrivants" to refer to all "those people forced into the Americas through the violence of European and Anglo-American colonialism and imperialism around the globe" (Byrd xix), including migrants of African (Walcott), Middle-Eastern (Adnan) and South Asian (Ali) descent, even as I carefully examine the specific conditions of mobility for each of the poets I discuss, noting how the poets themselves complicate the distinction between "forced" mobility versus "voluntary" mobility and mobility as a necessity versus mobility as a privilege. Following Byrd, I further contend that the United States is a modern settler-colonial empire that stands "on the verge of apocalyptic environmental collapse" (Byrd 3) not only because of a long history of colonial and racist violence, but because this violence against Natives, and as I would add arrivants, continues both in the United States and beyond its borders, accompanying and, arguably in many cases fueling, U.S. "global wars on terror, the environment, and livability" (Byrd xxxv). One of the weapons in these literal and figurative wars are, to modify Byrd for my purposes, "the language, grammar, and ontological categor[ies] of Indianness" (xxxv) and "Immigrantness" as well as the systems of knowledge and power hierarchies that sustain them. Challenging these grammars, categories, systems, and hierarchies through poetic language entails a revision of dominant settler-colonial and imperialist ideas about human-nature relations as much as a revision of traditional (poetic) language and form. The poets I analyze in this study attempt such revisions, whether they are settlers such as Juliana Spahr, Natives such as Craig Santos Perez, or arrivants such as Derek Walcott, Agha Shahid Ali, and Etel Adnan.

As the following five chapters demonstrate, this study is concerned not merely with contemporary poetries of migration but with contemporary *eco*poetries of migration. In other words, *Ecopoetic Place-Making* reads contemporary American ecopoetries as poetries of migration (in the case of Perez and Spahr) and contemporary American poetries of migration as ecopoetries (in the case of Walcott, Ali, and Ad-

nan) in order to explore the different *ecopoetics of mobility* that emerge in their works. In reading a body of works as diverse as the ones assembled here, I echo the broad definition of ecopoetry that Ann Fisher-Wirth and Laura-Gray Street employ in their introduction to *The Ecopoetry Anthology* (2013), where they initially define ecopoetry as poetry that "in some way is shaped by and responds specifically to […] the burgeoning environmental crisis" (xxviii) of the second half of the twentieth and first decades of the twenty-first century, but then include poetry published earlier as well. Fisher-Wirth and Street distinguish three types of ecopoetry: nature poetry, environmental poetry, and ecological poetry (xxviii-xxix). While their classification is by no means the only possible one, I find it useful to show how the poets I have chosen both fit and do not fit one of the more encompassing definitions of ecopoetry out there. Following Wendell Berry, for whom nature poetry "considers nature as subject matter and inspiration" (*A Continuous Harmony* 1), Fisher-Wirth and Street describe nature poetry as poetry that "often meditates on an encounter between the human subject and something in the other-than-human world that reveals an aspect of the meaning of life" (xxviii). By contrast, they define "environmental poetry" as poetry that is "propelled by and directly engaged with active and politicized environmentalism" (xxviii), and "ecological poetry" as poetry characterized by experimental form, self-reflexivity, and language-consciousness (xxix). Ecological poetry in Fisher-Wirth and Street's definition thus resembles what Angus Fletcher describes as the "environment-poem" (122), which is to say, a poem that functions as an ecological system of its own. Insofar as it can be described as "language-oriented" (Simpson ix), or, more accurately perhaps as "conceptually oriented" (Milne, *Poetry Matters* 8), "ecological poetry" in Fisher-Wirth and Street's sense can also be linked to the practice of ecopoetics as John Skinner defines it in his influential journal of the same name, that is, as an innovative form of environmentalist writing indebted to the avant-garde practices of the language poets as well as to "the system-aware writing of the 'New American' poetry" (Skinner, "Ecopoetics" 322–323) and thus to what Sarah Nolan describes as "unnatural ecopoetics" by which she means ecopoetry that uses "open and often extrapoetic forms and self-reflexive commentary on the failures of words to accurately express material reality in order to foreground naturecultures within the distinctly textual spaces created by the poem" (4). When I use the term *ecopoetics* in the following to suggest that each of the poets I analyze delineates his or her own particular ecopoetics of mobility, I deploy it in the more general sense of an environmentally-oriented or environmentally-suggestive poetics.

The works I analyze in *Ecopoetic Place-Making* encompass all three types of ecopoetry described by Fisher-Wirth and Street; at the same time, I suggest, they also challenge such categorizations and ultimately expand the boundaries of the genre. The work of Etel Adnan could be called "nature poetry" because it takes the nonhuman world as one of its key topics, reaches back to western and non-western mystic notions of N/nature and in doing so reflects on what it means to be in the world

and physically within nature after having been displaced. At the same time, her contemplative poems are associative and impressionistic in ways that recall modernist language experiments more so than Romantic meditations and contemporary experiments in "contemplative ecopoetics" (Rigby 25) inspired by them. Similarly, the poems by Juliana Spahr and Craig Santos Perez may be classified as "environmental poetry" insomuch as both poets explicitly address environmental destruction as well as environmental injustice throughout their work and openly encourage the kinds of individual, communal, and political action necessary to protect nature. At the same time, some of their texts also qualify as "ecological poems" insofar as they evince a certain conceptual orientation and self-consciously construct poetic environments in and through experimental language that seek to undermine, each from their respective situated perspective, settler anthropocentrism along with the pervasive American ideology of "*settler* monolingualism" (Dowling 3; emphasis original).

Of the works I discuss in my study, the poetry of Walcott and Ali fits the label of ecopoetry least comfortably. While their texts can be read as postcolonial revisions of an Anglo-American (post-)Romantic tradition of nature poetry—that is to say, of the genres, forms, and imagery as well as of the perspectives on history, subjectivity, and artistic expression that this tradition is associated with—human-nature relations are not the primary focus of their poetry. Although Walcott and Ali occasionally hint at environmental destruction in their works, their poems are neither explicitly environmentalist (and thus "environmental poetry") nor legible as poetic environments evoked through experimental language (and thus "ecological poetry"). Still, I would argue, we *can* and *should* read their poetry as ecopoetry, because just like Adnan, Spahr, and Perez, Walcott and Ali examine human-nature relations from different, if less overt, perspectives of im/mobility and in doing so provide valuable insights for our current moment of global environmental crisis and mass-migration within and across national borders. In that sense, all the poets I read can be considered examples of "decolonial ecopoetics," as Kate Rigby outlines it in *Reclaiming Romanticism: Towards an Ecopoetics of Decolonization* (2020), namely an ecopoetics that holds the promise (in the case of Walcott, Ali, and Adnan) and actively enacts the limits and potentialities (in the case of Perez and Spahr) "for a decolonizing praxis, pitched against both human domination of nonhuman others and the domination of some humans by others, especially, in the case of settler nations, Indigenous and enslaved peoples by colonial powers" (Rigby 4).

Indebted to expressive as well as to innovative poetic traditions, the migrant poets I discuss in *Ecopoetic Place-Making* experiment with perspective and voice. They challenge the conventions of the traditional lyric without fully abandoning the perspectives of socially, culturally, and physically situated, yet also mobile speakers. Since lyrical poetry is often defined in reference to John Stuart Mill as poetry featuring a self "*overheard*" (1216; emphasis original) speaking to itself, the implication has sometimes been that lyrical poetry is poetry about a self overheard speaking to

itself *about itself*. Contemporary ecopoetries of migration routinely question all these three "selves" and their relation to each other. Apart from challenging the authority and boundedness of the subject that speaks, contemporary American ecopoetries of migration frequently raise questions about which phenomena and whose experiences poetry can or should address and who should listen. In other words, the poets I read frequently evoke the problem of how to account for histories of violence that they have not been witness to or how to describe natural processes that cannot be perceived by human beings due to their spatial and/or temporal scale. As Alicia Ostriker notes in "Beyond Confession: The Poetics of Postmodern Witness" (2001), poets who attempt to act as poetic witnesses to the experiences and histories of others, including I would add nonhuman others, face a problem: "Formally, stylistically, what they represent is a crisis that is at once global and intimate: the simultaneous impossibility of objective witness and of subjective wholeness" (39). The struggle to write about and amidst a global yet intimate *environmental* crisis and the struggle to find a poetic language and form adequate to expressing both the global and intimate dimensions of a multitude of converging social, political, and environmental crises is at the heart of all the works discussed in this study.

Which genres, modes, poetic strategies, themes, and images are suited, then, for the challenge of writing about the intersecting issues of nature and mobility at a time of escalating environmental and mobility crises? As I suggest following poetry scholars Matthew Griffiths, and Jahan Ramazani, amongst others, many of the poetic qualities and strategies that enable ecopoetries of migration to deal with the conceptual complexities of climate change and environmental degradation on a global scale (Griffiths) as well as with the conceptual complexities of mobility in a globalized world (Ramazani) can be traced back to the innovations of modernist poetry in addition to those of Romantic poetry. In his study *The New Poetics of Climate Change* (2017), Griffiths articulates a number of challenges for thought and poetic practice that climate change poses and then reads the modernist poetries of T. S. Eliot, Wallace Stevens, Basil Buntin, and David Jones in order to explore the poetic qualities their poetry possesses and the strategies their works employ to respond to these challenges. According to Griffiths, these pertinent poetic qualities and strategies include:

> ironies of representation and a resistance to received ideas of 'Nature'; transnational or global scales, hybridization of natural change with cultural and social (anthropogenic) change and the breakdown of dualisms; a new problematics of environmental selfhood; language's vexed attempt to engage with the world and, reflexively, with its own materialism; and the expression of a troublesome environmental unconscious, which has been repressed by narratives of civilized progress. (Griffith 30)

While I have used different phrasings at times, some of the points mentioned here will sound familiar. The poets I read, too, engage critically with Romantic notions of mythic Nature; they too struggle to represent the unfathomable scales of the nonhuman; they too challenge the supposedly neat distinctions between the natural and the artificial, the human and the nonhuman, the urban and the rural; and their poetries too investigate the possibilities and limits of the situated perspectives of embodied lyrical subjects. In addition, contemporary ecopoetries of migration rework established poetic genres; they challenge universalist, racist, capitalist, imperialist, and settler-colonial logics; last but not least, they put emphasis on memories and (informal) knowledges, and interrogate writerly authority, especially with regard to the mobile poet's ability to bear witness to the histories of others as well as to a nonhuman world experienced variously as familiar or alien, intimately close or unfathomably vast, comforting or threatening, or all of these at once.

Like other recent studies of (world) poetry in English (see Hena or Suhr-Sytsma), Jahan Ramazani analyzes the works of poets from all kinds of cultural, ethnic, racial and migratory backgrounds. In his landmark study *A Transnational Poetics* (2009), for example, Ramazani explores the "new intergeographic spaces" (60) of Anglophone poetries, tracing the "circuits of poetic connection and dialogue across political and geographic borders and even hemispheres" (x-xi). Although Ramazani frequently mentions the migratory histories of the poets he reads and the ways human mobility figures in their works, he is generally more interested in "the cross-national mobility of modern and contemporary poetry" (*A Transnational Poetics* 23), that is to say, in instances of intertextuality, metaphorical border-crossing, and the transnational "travel" of genres, forms, and motives than in human mobility. He is also generally more concerned with cultural mobility than with N/nature. Yet, in one of the chapters of his most recent books, *Poetry in a Global Age* (2020), Ramazani adopts an ecoglobalist perspective on modernist and postmodernist poetry, reading Wallace Stevens, A.R. Ammons, Jorie Graham, and Juliana Spahr, amongst others, as poets who try to "envision and formally represent 'the wholeness of the earth'" (158) and "[t]he temporality of the world's enmeshment" (167), while at the same time displaying "exquisitely local phrases and textures and techniques" (161) and engaging "the micro-world of local experience" (175). Building on Ramazani's work, which reminds us that "poems reward attention to both their located and mobile qualities" (*Poetry in a Global Age* 10), I discuss how contemporary American poetries of migration employ global, transnational, transregional, and translocal poetic forms, themes, and imagery in order to grapple with histories of place and displacement as well as with the lived experiences of human-nature encounters in light of migration. At the same time, I highlight the ethical, political, and poetic affordances of contemporary American ecopoetries of migration that are neither fully ecolocalist nor fully ecoglobalist in orientation.

The Contours of this Study

The poetry collections I focus on in the different chapters of *Ecopoetic Place-Making* were published during the last decade of the twentieth century and the first two decades of the twenty-first century. In American studies, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, are often taken as a historical event that produced a paradigm shift in the U.S.-American cultural imagination (see Hungerford; Banita 12–17; Pease "From Virgin Land to Ground Zero"), which is why one could reserve the label *contemporary poetry* for twenty-first-century poetry in a U.S.-American context. By including poetry collections from the 1990s, rather than only discussing twenty-first century works, as many studies on contemporary American poetry do (see Reed's *Nobody's Business*, Keller's *Recomposing Ecopoetics*, or Milne's *Poetry Matters*), I do not mean to disregard 9/11 as an epochal event that has profoundly affected cultural production in the United States. Indeed, the attacks and their aftermath are addressed in the works of most of the poets included in my study as well as in many other works that I could have included. When we look at the poetry of Juliana Spahr in comparison with the poetry of Meena Alexander and Ed Roberson, for example, an argument could be made about how witnessing the attacks of 9/11 not only instilled in some American poets a more acute sense of living in a world of multiple intimate and global crises but also reinforced the urge of writing about the complex interconnections of nature and mobility, including bodily natures and nonhuman mobilities. At the same time, the transnational orientation of many of the poets I discuss also cautions against an over-emphasis on a periodization based on American history only, even though 9/11 and the wars that followed it arguably had considerable political and ecological consequences across the globe in addition to claiming so many lives on site.

In a similar manner, the fact that I concentrate on poetry published from the 1990s onward does not mean that poems published before the 1990s cannot be read productively with regard to their treatment of issues of nature and mobility. Indeed, some of Derek Walcott's earlier collections prove otherwise, as does Robert Boschman's analysis of matters of ecology and westward expansion in the works of Anne Bradstreet, Elizabeth Bishop, and Amy Clampitt (*In the Way of Nature* 2009), Jim Cocola's discussion of place and mobility in the works of poets such as Allen Ginsberg and Kamau Brathwaite (*Places in the Making* 2016), Christine Gerhardt's scholarship on representations of nature and mobility in Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson ("Imagining a Mobile Sense of Place"), Jahan Ramazani's discussion of Wallace Steven, A. R. Ammons, and Jorie Graham (*Poetry in a Global Age*), or my own work on Sharon Doubiago ("She Moves"). As will become apparent, I hope, whenever I discuss the ways in which Perez, Spahr, Walcott, Ali, and Adnan invoke literary precursors, poetry engaging in ecopoetic place-making from the 1990s onward has much in

common with earlier traditions of American poetry concerned with environmental issues and issues of mobility.

All the works of poetry I discuss in *Ecopoetic Place-Making* and many of the earlier examples discussed by the scholars mentioned in the previous paragraph were published during an era sometimes referred to as the "Great Acceleration," a historical period following World War II that can be seen as ecologically, technologically, and economically distinct from previous eras due to rapidly accelerating growth and the attendant intensification of harm affecting the planet (Ronda 1–4). Much like the way Margaret Ronda argues for the poetries published from the 1950s onward that she analyzes in *Remainders: American Poetry at Nature's End* (2018), the ecopoetries of migration I am interested in, published from the 1990s onward, are attuned to "the planetary poiesis of global capitalism in the Great Acceleration" (Ronda 5) and to the "ongoing and intensifying processes that characterize natural-historical entanglements in this period" (13). Whether one considers Perez, Spahr, Walcott, Ali or Adnan, their works all engage—through experimentation with genre, voice, form, and poetic language—with the disjointed temporalities of a world in crisis, conceiving of "poetry as an aesthetic space for meditating on what remains" (Ronda 18) as well as on what may already be lost. Yet, the poems I read also distinguish themselves in significant ways from the longer tradition of American poetries of the Great Acceleration attuned to issues of nature and human mobility. They are frequently more critical in their treatment of U.S. imperialism and settler-colonialism and in their treatment of modern regimes of displacement, mobilization, and immobilization. They also differ in how they address longer histories of (localized) environmental degradation and injustice together with the contemporary effects of U.S. imperialism and settler-colonialism on the global environmental crisis, the scope of which came into focus for the broader public only toward the end of the twentieth century.[8]

8 From the perspective of environmental history, too, the decision to focus on literary texts written during the late 1980s and published from the early 1990s onward makes sense. Indeed, the late 1980s were marked by considerable social, political, and cultural change, both in terms of official government policies and in terms of changes concerning broader public awareness toward climate change as a global environmental crisis. Only one year after the stratospheric "ozone hole" was discovered in 1987, a discovery that caused considerable media attention, NASA climate specialist James Hansen testified at a U.S. congressional hearing about global warming on June 23, 1988, declaring that the persistent rise of global median temperatures could no longer be regarded as having entirely natural causes (Hansen "Statement"). While this was not the first time that leading climate scientists made such conclusions public—as a matter of fact, in 1986 Hansen himself had already testified at the U.S. Senate Committee on the Environment and Public Works—, Hansen's 1988 testimony certainly contributed to the transformation of the discourse on global warming from a scientific to a political and finally to a policy issue (See Bodansky "The History of the Global Climate Change Regime" 23–27).

The works I analyze do not merely respond to the accumulating social and environmental consequences of the Great Acceleration; they also respond more or less explicitly to what Lynn Keller calls the "self-conscious Anthropocene" (*Recomposing Ecopoetics* 2), that is, a "period of *changed recognition*, when the responsibility humans bear for the condition of the planet [...] is widely understood" (2; emphasis original). Keller dates the beginnings of the "self-conscious Anthropocene" to the year 2000 (*Recomposing Ecopoetics* 9), likely for the introduction of the term *Anthropocene* in print that year (see Crutzen and Stoermer) as well as for the symbolism this date holds as the dawn of the new millennium. As works by poets such as Derek Walcott demonstrate, however, the kind of (self-)conscious awareness of anthropogenic planetary change that Keller sees spreading in twenty-first-century American ecopoetry was already present at least a decade earlier in the writing of marginalized poets and specifically migrant poets from former colonies, that is to say, poets born and raised in places dramatically altered by human and nonhuman mobilities and disproportionally affected by environmental degradation and global environmental change. Even more, American ecopoetries of migration from the 1990s onward, I would argue, do not merely articulate the "changed recognition" (Keller, *Recomposing Ecopoetics* 2) that human beings have had a world-altering impact on local and global ecosystems ever since the beginning of the Anthropocene, whether one is inclined to date this epochal beginning back to the Great Acceleration, the industrial revolution, the colonization of the Americas, or a different point in human history. The American ecopoetries of migration I read also reflect on the altered politics, ethics, and poetics of place, mobility, self, and community that must accompany such a changed recognition, if it is to produce more ecological futures that are also more socially just.

Aside from the present introduction and a short conclusion, *Ecopoetic Place-Making* consists of five chapters, each focusing on the work of one poet. Chapter 1 analyzes passages from the first four volumes of Craig Santos Perez's ongoing series *from unincorporated territory* (2008, 2010, 2014, 2017, 2023). In turn, chapter 2 primarily concentrates on two collections that Juliana Spahr published in 2001 and 2011 respectively. I thus begin this study by reading two poets who have been widely recognized and discussed as ecopoets, but whose works reveal new depths when read with systematic attention to issues of mobility. In chapter 3, I discuss a book-length poem of migration by Derek Walcott, a poet whose decade-long career allows me to sketch a brief history of the different scholarly fields that my study draws and builds on. Analyzing Walcott's long-poem *Omeros* (1990) furthermore allows me to establish some of the key issues that emerge when one reads American poetries of migration as ecopoetries: these issues include, but are not limited to questions concerning genre, scale, and representability as well as questions concerning the limits of poetic witnessing and the ethics of poetic place-making. In some sense, then, my chapter on Walcott also represents a transition between a first part of *Ecopoetic Place-*

Making in which I discuss the work of two ecopoets as poetries of migration and a second part of my study in which I read the works of two migrant poets as ecopoetries. Specifically, chapter 4 of *Ecopoetic Place-Making* concentrates on Agha Shahid Ali's collection *A Nostalgist's Map of America* (1991), highlighting the role of memory for the production of environmental imaginaries informed by perspectives of mobility as well as the role of literature for the emergence of alternative forms of community and belonging in poetries about place and displacement. Last but not least, I analyze several of the late collections of Etel Adnan in chapter 5 of *Ecopoetic Place-Making*, showing how two different perspectives of im/mobility, or as I conceptualize it, post-mobility, inform her poetry about N/nature in ways similar to, yet also different from the works of the other poets in the study.

In my analysis of Craig Santos Perez's ongoing series *from unincorporated territory* (2008-ongoing) in chapter 1, I foreground the precariousness of place-based Indigenous knowledges in the context of colonization, environmental degradation, and CHamoru mass migration. Concentrating primarily on the first three volumes of his series, *[hacha]* (2008), *[saina]* (2010), and *[guma']* (2014) and including occasional references to the fourth volume *[lukao]* (2017), I outline how Perez frames CHamoru place-making on his native island of Guam/Guåhan as an epistemological and political project of decolonization that must be attentive to the inextricable link between cultural and environmental losses, while also addressing histories of immobilization and mass mobility. I first show how Perez's poems draw attention to the endangered ecologies of Guåhan by highlighting the continuities between historical practices of colonial enclosure and contemporary colonial practices of CHamoru immobilization. I then outline how Perez's collections reflect on the connection between precarious Indigenous genealogies and land-sky-ocean-based epistemologies as well as on resulting problems of environmental knowledge transmission in light of CHamoru mass migration. Finally, I demonstrate how Perez reaches beyond documentary modes in *from unincorporated territory* to highlight CHamoru environmental imaginaries of mobility and to formulate a participatory ecopoetics of mobility that engages his readers not only in what can be described as a decolonial project of ecopoetic place-making but also in a poetic experiment in critical environmental pedagogy.

In chapter 2, I read the poetry of Anglo-American settler poet Juliana Spahr arguing that it uses para-lyrical experimentations to investigate the limits of settler ecological agency in the context of global capitalism and U.S. imperialism. Focusing primarily on her collections *Fuck You—Aloha—I Love You* (2001) and *Well Then There Now* (2011), I examine how Spahr's experimental ecopoetry challenges notions of anthropocene subjectivity by drawing attention to how different scales of human and nonhuman mobility shape the ecosocial processes through which subjects and collectivities are constituted. In the first part of the chapter, I discuss poems set in the United States that emphasize issues of embodiment and "trans-corporeality"

(Alaimo) in the context of toxification, pointing to the need of rethinking of environmental ethics based on close contact with the more-than-human world. In the second part of the chapter, I demonstrate how Spahr's poems about Hawai'i render suspicious settler acts of ecopoetic place-making in the context of U.S. occupation of the archipelago by showing how continental migrants' desire for emplacement through an immersion in the nonhuman world of Hawai'i clashes with Indigenous rights of access to and control of the land. In the third part of the chapter, finally, I read poems set both in Hawai'i and the United States as poems that struggle, but ultimately do not claim to succeed in imagining forms of settler ecopoetic place-making that avoid the logic of settlement and exploitation.

Chapter 3 turns to the Afro-Caribbean poet Derek Walcott, arguing that his book-length poem *Omeros* (1990) can be read as a lyricized planetary epic that displays not only postcolonial and transnational, but also environmental sensibilities shaped by different perspectives of mobility. Starting with a discussion of the Caribbean passages, but focusing primarily on the understudied U.S.-American passages of *Omeros*, I show how Walcott's long poem combines epic with the short forms of travel poem, pastoral, elegy, and confessional lyric in order to draw attention in content and form to the discrepant scales of a world in crisis as well as to the challenges of representability these crises pose. Beginning with the passages of *Omeros* in which his narrator returns to the Caribbean, I demonstrate how the author's framing of his epic as a travel poem produces tensions between the postcolonial and the transnational sensibilities as well as between the localizing and globalizing tendencies in Walcott's planetary epic. These tensions, which shape the critical environmental imaginary of mobility that emerges in his text, I argue, result in part from the migrant poet's engagements with histories of place and displacement in the United States as well as from the problems of place-making that arise for an Afro-Caribbean migrant when he begins to write about place and displacement in the United States. Analyzing sections of *Omeros* set in the U.S. South that address the Transatlantic Slave Trade as well as Native American Removal, I explore how Walcott modifies the pastoral to counter what has been called "New World amnesia" (Handley). Reading sections that depict landscapes in the American West together with the history of Catherine Weldon, a white nineteenth-century immigrant woman who acted as secretary to the Lakota leader Sitting Bull, I discuss Walcott's use of the pastoral elegy for thinking through the ethics of bearing witness to histories of place and displacement that are not one's own. Last but not least, I show how Walcott employs a combination of confessional lyric and epic to dramatize the problems of representability that present themselves to a privileged postcolonial poet of color and migrant when he is confronted with the violent history and vast landscapes of what is now the United States.

In chapter 4, I read the collection *A Nostalgist's Map of America* (1991) by the Kashmiri-American poet Agha Shahid Ali, arguing that Ali does not sidestep or reject

nostalgia in favor of memory as a seemingly more reliable and responsible basis for (eco)poetic place-making in the context of displacement. Instead, I suggest, Ali willfully reaches beyond the conventional limits imposed on migrants' place-memory and place-experience by integrating imagined histories and distant locales into his poetry about the Sonoran Desert and his speaker's movements between the U.S. Southwest and Northeast. In other words, Ali embraces reflective nostalgia as a place-conscious, and ultimately environmentally suggestive affect that is especially well suited for migrants who cannot depend on memories and experiences alone for ecopoetic place-making, but who must also rely on their own poetic imagination as well as the poetic imagination of others to build meaningful relationships to the places they pass through. As I posit in this chapter, Ali's nostalgic ecopoetics of mobility manifests in *A Nostalgist's Map of America* in two interrelated ways: first, in a translocal sense of place accompanied by evocations of mobile forms of place attachment; and second, in a "diasporic intimacy with the world" that depends both on a critical engagement with places and their histories and on a critical engagement with other works of literature and art invested in nature and mobility, including but not limited to the nature poetry of Emily Dickinson, the desert paintings of Georgia O'Keeffe, and the non-fiction of naturalist Gary Paul Nabhan. In embracing a translocal and mobile sense of place as well as the ultimately unfulfilled longing for a diasporic intimacy with the world, I lay bare in the last part of the chapter, *A Nostalgist's Map of America* gestures toward more mobile and inclusive forms of ecological citizenship, challenging exclusive notions of belonging and reductive conceptions of emplacement that over-emphasize long-term residency, personal experience, and first-hand knowledge as the basis of meaningful and environmentally significant place-attachment.

Chapter 5 entails an analysis of the poetry of Lebanese-American painter and writer Etel Adnan, whose poetry, I suggest, deals evocatively and provocatively with the temporal dimensions of human-nature relations in the context of two different yet ultimately related forms of "post-mobility." Focusing on her collections *There* (1997), *Seasons* (2008), *Sea and Fog* (2012), and *Night* (2016), I analyze how Adnan's poetry represents a migrant's relationship to the natural world of the Pacific Coast in the aftermath of migration on the one hand and in light of the reduced mobility that comes with old age on the other hand. Drawing on insights from queer ecocriticism, queer phenomenology, and queer theory more broadly, I argue that Etel Adnan's nature poetry produces a queering of environmental ethics in three related ways. First, the poet's emphasis on the disorienting effect of displacement and the resulting desire for reorientation through and toward nature results in a queering of traditional notions of dwelling. Second, her poetry suggests that ecological desire in the context of post-mobility, whether due to displacement or aging, must accommodate a queer erotogenic ethics based on touch as well as one based on the sensuality of thought. Third, I propose, that an experimental ecopoetry that continues to disori-

ent its readers, while simultaneously reorienting them toward the natural world as it explores approaching death as well as environmental apocalypse, may be a useful tool not only to imagine queerer and more ecological futures but also to enact them in the present.

In my conclusion, finally, I provide a short summary of the different environmental imaginaries of migration and the different ecopoetics of mobility that emerge in contemporary American poetry about nature and mobility. Contemporary American ecopoetries of migration along with contemporary American ecopoetries of mobility more broadly, I emphasize in closing, challenge settler-colonial nationalist, racist, and otherwise exclusionary models of belonging on which traditional understandings of environmentally-conscious living and environmentality—in the sense of the institutionalized and non-institutionalized organization of environmental governance—are based. At the same time, they challenge imperialist, settler-colonial, and neocolonial forms of place-making, whether in poetry or through other practices, pointing to the ways in which contemporary mobilities and the place-making they engender remain enmeshed with violent systems invested in regulation human-nature relations as well as human and nonhuman mobilities. At the same time, I suggest, the analysis of ecopoetries of migration raises important questions about environmental cultures of mobility more broadly conceived, whether in the United States or beyond. How might the analysis of such environmental cultures of mobility help us to rethink notions of subjectivity and community, belonging and identity in light of our current moment of converging environmental and mobility crises? How can they help us to rethink traditional notions of place and emplacement, place-attachment, and sustainability in order to accommodate lives and cultures on the move? What could be the function of history, memory, and the imagination in forms of cultural expressed informed by mobile environmental imaginaries? What would be the place of ethics, politics, and poetics in these cultural works? And, last but not least, what place might literature and the arts hold in environmental cultures of mobility as well as in the scholarship exploring them? The answers to these questions are complex and sometimes elusive. Yet, they must be asked, I contend, in order for us to begin to make sense of a world in which both the most intimate forms of human-nature engagements and the most common practices of mobility can come to signify freedom or oppression, life or death, a risk of self-destruction or a chance at survival.